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2-2012

Parental neighbourhood satisfaction : a snap shot of parents of 5 – 12 year olds

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Recommended Citation

Underwood, C. (2012). Parental neighbourhood satisfaction : a snap shot of parents of 5 – 12 year olds.
<https://research.acer.edu.au/cimat/3>

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Parental Neighbourhood Satisfaction:

A snap shot of parents of 5 – 12 year olds

A child-friendly neighbourhood increases children's confidence to safely negotiate and explore their neighbourhood while enhancing their physical health and wellbeing.

This 'snap shot' highlights the extent to which parents of students aged 5 to 12 years living in six Victorian municipalities (3 metropolitan and 3 regional) are satisfied with their neighbourhood. The sample comprised 504 parents. Parents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with a series of statements about their neighbourhood. The data came from a self-completed survey sent home from school with students. Data was collected in 2010 for VicHealth.

With 10 per cent of the Victorian population aged between 5 and 12 years in 2010¹ the information obtained from this cohort of parents provides a useful picture of parent's views.

My neighbourhood ...

The neighbourhood environment is important to increasing the likelihood of children developing independence and connectivity with their neighbourhood.

	Metropolitan [Agree/ Strongly agree]	Regional [Agree/ Strongly agree]
there are attractive buildings, trees and gardens too see	65%	61%
there are many sporting clubs or other sporting facilities for children	53%	57%
there are bike or walking tracks that are easy to get to from our home	51%	46%
there is a lot of traffic along most nearby streets making it difficult or unpleasant to go for walks	44%	51%

Parents are more concerned with traffic in their neighbourhood. Parents in metropolitan areas were slightly more satisfied with their neighbourhood than their regional counterparts.

It is safe for my child to independently ...

Parental belief about the safety of their neighbourhood influences the extent to which they will let their children move around independently in their community.

	Metropolitan [Agree/ Strongly agree]	Regional [Agree/ Strongly agree]
walk, cycle, skate or scoot alone during the day	42%	46%
travel to school	40%	36%
play in the street	36%	49%
play in the local park	34%	49%
travel to places other than school	24%	35%
cross main roads	21%	20%
take public transport	11%	18%

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2010). *Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia*, ABS Cat. no. 3235.0. Canberra: ABS.

Parents in regional areas were more likely to agree that it is safe for their child to move around in their neighbourhood independent of adult supervision. For both groups, there appears to be significant concern.

Barriers to child's physical activity in the neighbourhood...

Barriers in the neighbourhood impact on the extent to which children are able to move around in it independently.

	Metropolitan [Agree/ Strongly agree]	Regional [Agree/ Strongly agree]
'Stranger Danger'	76%	71%
Road safety	73%	74%
Distance from home to my child's school	42%	54%
Few local sporting or recreational venues	38%	37%
Distance from home to local parks	32%	34%
Limited public transport	23%	20%

A higher proportion of parents both reported 'stranger danger' as the most significant barrier to their child's physical activity in their neighbourhood.

Neighbourliness ...

A sense of 'neighbourliness' is important in developing independent mobility among children. When children move independently around in their neighbourhood, they increase their self-confidence, familiarity with neighbours and their sense of belonging.

	Metropolitan [Agree/ Strongly agree]	Regional [Agree/ Strongly agree]
Your often see families out walking or cycling	77%	71%
I feel safe	73%	79%
In my neighbourhood my family knows many people	61%	69%
You often hear children playing in the street	37%	39%

Parents in metropolitan and regional areas see their neighbourhood as family friendly.

Travel mode to school ...

Fifty-six per cent of children lived less than 20 minutes walking distance from their school (metropolitan: 63%; regional: 49%). Over half of them were driven to school.

	Metropolitan	Regional
Passive mode of transport (i.e. car, bus or taxi)	53%	58%
Active mode of transport (i.e. cycle, skate or scoot)	44%	39%

In summary, parents of children aged 5 to 12 years had a very positive view of their neighbourhood for their family. However, parents reported concerns about how safe they felt their neighbourhood was for their child to move around independently, especially because of traffic and fear of strangers.

Contact details for further information

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Acknowledgement

ACER gratefully acknowledges the funding provided by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation and the parents who participated in the research.